

Whorehouse

At night, giddy, underage boys enter the gate,
led by Madame through poorly lit corridors
to the choosing room. Big Bella,
black and sensuous, is the ritual guide.

Girls in high heels file out and line up,
showing barely clad wares.
Young ones with glowing skin
still taut over firm flesh;
middle-age ones, still blond,
hiding wrinkles beneath layers of make-up;
a tall black one, from no one knows where.

Three men sit at the bar
treating girls to a drink:
a shepherd back from the range,
a trucker passing through,
and the local real estate agent, who wonders
do these girls get letters from their mothers? and,
to where is it addressed? The men smile

at these boys, hoping to become men the short way,
doubting that courage from beer
will see them through.
But a brave one chooses his girl straightway—
the dark haired one with pale skin.
Taking her hand, he follows her down the hallway
to the inner room. On the way

he is struck by the oddity of a window
with open curtains, in which he glimpses,
through his own reflection, the darkness
and dim lights in the distance.

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